



# ROCHESTER

*Minnesota*

## MARION ROAD TRUNK SANITARY SEWER PROJECT ALTERNATIVE URBAN AREAWIDE REVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In December 1998, the City of Rochester initiated a Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) to extend sanitary sewer and water to homes with failing and substandard septic systems and wells primarily in areas surrounding the City with near-surface groundwater. Hundreds of homeowners near Rochester's southeastern boundary petitioned for this service. The Marion Road Trunk Sanitary Sewer Project was developed in response to the City Council's acceptance of petitions for service to homes and businesses in Sewer Service Area 16. The completion of this Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) became a special condition of the "Revised Permit for the Construction and Operation of a Disposal System" for the Marion Road Trunk Sanitary Sewer Project (No. 23305, April 21, 2000).

The extension of sanitary sewer and water lines to older neighborhoods outside the City limits was the culmination of a lengthy process. A correlation between older subdivisions with failing and substandard septic systems and contaminated groundwater in these areas led to the establishment of the WQPP. The objective of the project was to improve and protect groundwater quality in the Rochester area by providing City water and sanitary sewer facilities for the collection and treatment of wastewater to older subdivisions that were built with small lots without the capacity for septic system replacement. The City obtained state approval to collect limited sales tax money to help pay for the construction of the sewer and water lines and to subsidize the individual homeowner and business connections and abandonment of private wells and septic systems. The City Council adopted a policy in 1992 whereby the City does not require any existing home or business owner to connect to City sewer and/or water when it is installed to serve a particular subdivision, as long as their private well or septic system is in good operating condition. In subdivisions with available City sewer and/or water services, connection is required when the respective private systems fail. Consequently, connection to City services was voluntary. However, subdivisions desiring these services were also subject to annexation into the City.

### 2.0 THE AUAR PROCESS

An AUAR is a type of environmental review used to assess potential cumulative environmental impacts of future urban development over a broad geographic area. The AUAR process is limited to the analysis of impacts from residential, light industrial, and warehousing development that would otherwise encompass several projects independently under the traditional Environmental Assessment

Worksheet (EAW) process. This AUAR also includes some neighborhood commercial development within residential areas. The EAW process typically applies to smaller-scale, project-specific assessments and does not address development projects less than eighty acres in size unless other thresholds requiring environmental review are met or exceeded. In addition to the completion of an inventory of natural and cultural resources and the evaluation of the impact on those resources from future development, the

AUAR process also includes the preparation of a “Mitigation Plan” that identifies methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate unacceptable environmental impacts that may have independent or cumulative effects as future development takes place. This AUAR document consists of three parts:

- Part I – Marion Road Trunk Sanitary Sewer Project Alternative Urban Areawide Review Background and Process.
- Part II – Marion Road Trunk Sanitary Sewer Project Alternative Urban Areawide Review Response to Questions.
- Part III – Marion Road Trunk Sanitary Sewer Project Alternative Urban Areawide Review Mitigation Plan.

### **3.0      *INPUT TO DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO***

As part of establishing the development scenario, land use patterns were considered that accounted for existing development, developable residential lands, and areas that are considered “highly constrained”, and, therefore, undevelopable. Highly constrained areas consist of floodways, water bodies, and other physical features that are either barriers to construction or features rigorously regulated by law. Moderate constraints that can be mitigated (through avoidance, minimization, or compensatory mitigation of impacts) or low constraints that are unregulated did not affect the overall density applied to the hypothetical development scenario because it cannot be assumed that they will prohibit development. The location of varying levels of residential density within the project area reflected existing and planned infrastructure capacity, existing development patterns, approved land uses and zoning districts, along with the locations of cultural and natural resource features.

### **4.0      *DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO***

It is important to remember that *the hypothetical development scenario reflects the highest reasonable and feasible density that could be expected to occur in the project area* given the designated land use patterns and the logical zoning district that would apply to the area upon its annexation into the City of Rochester. This is done to help maintain consistency between future developments within the project area such that unanticipated environmental impacts and less rigorous, independent environmental reviews are avoided. In most cases, independent environmental reviews can be avoided if future development proposals are consistent with the AUAR and Mitigation Plan.

The hypothetical development scenario was adopted by the City Council on January 23, 2002. The scenario does not preclude or supercede the City and County official plans, ordinances, and development process, or change opportunities for interested citizens to participate in the development process.

## 5.0 **MITIGATION PLAN**

To mitigate unacceptable environmental impacts identified in the Marion Road Trunk Sanitary Sewer Project AUAR, the following mitigation measures have been identified. As existing ordinances, plans, and regulations are amended, modified, or replaced, they will be applicable to the AUAR project area. The changes may trigger an AUAR update only if mitigation measures need to be modified as a result of these changes. Plans and policies provide guidance and context for future development that is implemented via ordinances and resolutions adopted by the City Council. In some cases, other jurisdictional units are responsible for implementation of mitigation measures. In such cases, the City will take reasonable and good faith efforts to secure such actions from its governmental counterparts that have the authority and responsibility for implementing noted mitigation measures.

- All permits identified in the AUAR will be secured by the City, or other public or private parties as appropriate, for all development activities within the project area.
- The City will follow the guidance and context in its adopted policies and plans and oversee the implementation of its own regulations as they apply to the review and approval of all development activities within the project area. These items include the *Land Use Plan for the Rochester Urban Service Area* and the *City of Rochester Code of Ordinances*. The City's *Stormwater Management Plan* and *Comprehensive Wetland Management Plan* will be used as technical resources in reviewing development activities. County planning documents will be followed as appropriate for interim development, including the *Olmsted County General Land Use Plan*, the *Olmsted County Zoning Ordinances*, and the *Olmsted County Comprehensive Water Management Plan*.
- The City's extension of sewer and water services will progress consistent with development needs, WQPP guidelines, and this AUAR. Well and septic system construction and abandonment regulations will be followed in the project area.
- The appropriate roadway authority will monitor traffic changes associated with new development within the AUAR project area and will implement improvements identified in this AUAR as dictated by traffic levels.
- The City will require the design and construction of adequate regional and local stormwater ponds and trunk facilities to protect water resources and water quality as required by the *City of Rochester Code of Ordinances*.
- The City will implement a tracking mechanism to monitor development and its conformance with the development scenario.
- Transitional lot size densities consistent with Section 63.111 of the *City of Rochester Code of Ordinances* will be followed for development adjacent to large lot subdivisions.
- The City will implement existing floodplain, wetland, shoreland zoning, and related natural resource regulations per the *City of Rochester Code of Ordinances*. Consideration will also be given to natural communities and Decorah-Edge protection measures during the General Development Plan (GDP) review process. County planning documents will be followed as appropriate for interim development, including the *Olmsted County General Land*

*Use Plan, Olmsted County Zoning Ordinance, and the Olmsted County Comprehensive Water Management Plan.*

- The City will implement the following stewardship mitigation measures:
  1. Educate:
    - a. Decision-makers, the development community, local government staff, and citizens on the benefits of and programs available for natural areas conservation and land stewardship.
    - b. Existing landowners prior to the conception of development plans for their land to inform them about alternative development styles and tools available to conserve the natural resources present on their property.
  2. Prepare an Environmental Review Checklist for use by developers to confirm their understanding of the AUAR data, identify the Mitigation Plan measures applicable to their development proposals, and document their developments' consistency with the hypothetical development scenario. In lieu of completing an EAW worksheet, the Checklist will outline natural resource features, mitigation measures, and land stewardship options as part of the General Development Plan review process as a means to encourage developers to fit the subdivision to the land rather than make the land fit the subdivision.
  3. Provide the development community, consulting firms, governmental units, and referral agencies with examples of conservation design subdivisions and other stewardship tools along with electronic data (e.g., CDs or ArcIMS access on the Internet) that delineates sensitive areas and links AUAR data and mitigation requirements with parcel base maps for use in project design and review.
  4. Update the City of Rochester's *Parkland Acquisition Plan* within the next five years to identify future park needs in the AUAR project area including the identification of floodplains and other natural areas appropriate for public land acquisition in consideration of passive use and environmental corridor development.
  5. Update the *Rochester Urban Service Area Land Use Plan Map* to delineate cultural (archaeological, historic, and architectural) sites and environmental corridors located in the recently expanded areas of the City's Urban Service and Urban Reserve Areas by the end of 2004.

Refer to Part III-Mitigation Plan, Table 3-1 for a tabular listing of specific mitigation measures and responsible entities.